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Groups of countries in special situations: specific actions related to the particular needs and problems of landlocked developing countries: outcome of the International Ministerial Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor Countries and International Financial and Development Institutions on Transit Transport Cooperation

Implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action: Addressing the Special Needs of Landlocked Developing Countries within a New Global Framework for Transit Transport Cooperation for Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

During the short period of time since the adoption by the General Assembly on 23 December 2003 of its resolution 58/201 endorsing the outcome of the International Ministerial Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor Countries and International Financial and Development Institutions on Transit Transport Cooperation, major attention has been given by the organizations and bodies of the United Nations system to mobilizing awareness at the national, regional and international levels of the Almaty Programme of Action: Addressing the Special Needs of Landlocked Developing Countries within a New Global Framework for Transit Transport Cooperation for Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and to the importance of its full and effective implementation.

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The organizations of the United Nations system made concerted efforts to operationalize coordination and monitoring mechanisms for the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action (A/CONF.202/3, annex I). One of the main results in this regard was the preparation of the road map towards the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action, which would provide guidance to organizations within the United Nations system and other relevant international, regional and subregional organizations in undertaking necessary actions in a focused and well-coordinated manner. The present report highlights initial activities undertaken by the organizations and bodies of the United Nations system for the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action.

I. Introduction

1. Landlocked developing countries are generally among the poorest of the developing countries, with the weakest growth rates and records of social development. The international community has recognized that the lack of territorial access to the sea, remoteness and isolation from world markets are the primary causes of those countries' relative poverty. Their seaborne trade unavoidably depends on transit through other countries and on their transit policies, enterprises and facilities. Additional border crossings and long distances from major markets substantially increase the total expenses for transport services, eroding the competitive edge of landlocked developing countries. Such a disadvantaged situation leads to the marginalization of landlocked developing countries with respect to international trade and the world economy. Establishment of efficient transit transport systems will depend on cooperative arrangements between landlocked developing countries and their transit neighbours. In many cases their transit neighbours, especially the least developed coastal countries, are of broadly similar economic structure and beset by scarcities of resources. Many are typically not in a position to offer transport systems of high technical and administrative standards to which their landlocked neighbours might link themselves.

2. In order to place appropriate emphasis on the persistent problems faced by landlocked developing countries, and pursuant to General Assembly resolution 57/242 of 20 December 2002, the International Ministerial Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor Countries and International Financial and Development Institutions on Transit Transport Cooperation was held in August 2003 in Almaty, Kazakhstan. It was the first high-level global event of the United Nations to address the special needs and problems of landlocked developing countries in order to integrate them effectively into the world economy by establishing efficient transit transport systems in both landlocked and transit developing countries. The overarching goal of the Almaty Programme of Action[1] is to forge partnerships to overcome the special problems of landlocked developing countries caused by their lack of territorial access to the sea and their remoteness and isolation from world markets. The Programme of Action, which identifies specific actions in five priority areas, namely fundamental transit policy issues, infrastructure development and maintenance, international trade and trade facilitation, international support measures, and implementation and review, seeks to establish efficient transport systems, recognizing the link between transport and international trade as well as economic growth. The Programme of Action aims to (a) secure access to and from the sea by all means of transport according to applicable rules of international law; (b) reduce costs and improve services so as to increase the competitiveness of their exports; (c) reduce the delivered costs of imports; (d) address problems of delays and uncertainties in trade routes; (e) develop adequate national networks; (f) reduce loss, damage and deterioration en route; (g) open the way for export expansion; and (h) improve safety of road transport and security of people along the corridors.

3. In paragraph 5 of its resolution 58/201 the General Assembly decided to include in the provisional agenda of its fifty-ninth session an item entitled "Specific actions related to the particular needs and problems of landlocked developing

[1] A/CONF.202/3, annex I.

countries: outcome of the International Ministerial Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor Countries and International Financial and Development Institutions on Transit Transport Cooperation".

4. In paragraph 6 of the same resolution, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on the progress made in the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action. The present report focuses on initiatives undertaken by the organizations within the United Nations system and by other relevant international and regional organizations. At this early stage, major attention is being paid by the organizations of the United Nations system to mobilizing awareness at the national, regional and international levels of the Programme of Action and of the importance of its full and effective implementation. Those organizations have made concerted efforts to operationalize coordination and monitoring mechanisms for the Programme of Action and to define a road map for its effective implementation.

II. System-wide activities for the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action

5. The road map for the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action was prepared by the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States in close consultation with organizations of the United Nations system and other relevant international organizations. An inter-agency meeting, convened on 4 February 2004, endorsed the road map for the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action. The inter-agency meeting emphasized that one of the main reasons for the success in the process leading to Almaty was its broad-based participatory approach involving a variety of United Nations agencies and international and regional and subregional organizations specialized in different aspects of transit transport cooperation. The meeting agreed that such a participatory approach should also be the main organizational approach for follow-up activities related to the Almaty conference. In this regard, the road map proposed that a system of focal points established during the preparations leading to Almaty should be used as a main mechanism for inter-agency cooperation and coordination in implementing the Programme of Action. In addition, relevant non-governmental organizations, private sector and professional organizations would be broadly involved in the process.

6. The road map outlines, for organizations and bodies of the United Nations system and other relevant international and regional organizations, potential strategies for action that are designed to ensure the full and effective implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action. The road map is a clear and practical document that would assist member countries, regional commissions, international, regional organizations and financial institutions to progress in the implementation of the Programme of Action in a focused and well-coordinated manner, with a view to achieving tangible results.

7. The immediate actions identified in the road map are as follows:

(a) Identification of major missing links in Africa, Asia and Latin America in consultation with the relevant regional commissions and other subregional, regional and international organizations;

(b) Solicitation of funds to complete those missing links in close cooperation with the relevant regional commissions and other regional and subregional integration organizations;

(c) Identification of subregional priority projects on the development of infrastructure and trade facilitation measures and solicitation of funds for their implementation;

(d) Encouragement of landlocked and transit developing countries, where necessary, in the establishment of national trade facilitation boards, involving all stakeholders, with a view to channelling international support in the area of trade facilitation;

(e) Preparation of guidelines for the establishment of national trade facilitation boards;

(f) Promotion of accession to the international conventions in the area of transport and transit trade.

8. Initial activities undertaken by various organizations within the United Nations system are described below.

9. In its paragraphs 42, 44, 47 and 51 the Almaty Programme of Action provided a clear mandate to the organizations of the United Nations system and other relevant international organizations. The regional commissions are expected to play a major role in the implementation of the Programme of Action as efficient transit transport systems should be established at the regional and subregional levels. The interests and concerns of landlocked developing countries are being taken into careful consideration in the implementation of the trans-African highways, the Asian Highway, the Trans-Asian Railway Network and international North-South corridor projects, as well as the Initiative for the Integration of Regional Infrastructure in South America (IIRSA) and the Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia. Particular attention is being paid to constructing the "missing links" in the regional and subregional networks. The subregional and regional infrastructure development plans should give high priority to transit corridors linking landlocked developing countries to the transport network in transit developing countries, as well as to the regional network. Furthermore, railways have an important role to play in the transit transport corridor systems linking ocean ports with landlocked developing countries.

10. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) is playing a major role in the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action through the Sub-Saharan Africa Transport Policy Programme, an Africa-based, Africa-owned partnership programme launched in 1987 as a joint initiative between the World Bank and the Commission to improve transport sector performance through policy reforms and institutional changes. The Transport Policy Programme has prepared a long-term development plan (2007 target date) including clearly defined benchmarks, measurable indicators of achievement and assigned tasks. An action plan was also adopted during the Sub-Saharan Africa Transport Policy Programme meeting organized in Nairobi in February 2004, the purpose of which was to increase

ownership of Regional Economic Communities and to meet their requirement in implementing the 2004 work programme.

11. In October 2003, a total of 4.6 million United States dollars ($) was mobilized to fund Transport Policy Programme activities, out of which $895,000 has been distributed to Regional Economic Communities. In all the Regional Economic Communities for which funds have been allocated, transit transport facilitation accounts for a substantial part of the planned activities. Examples of transit transport facilitation activities promoted by the Transport Policy Programme include establishing observatories of abnormal practices along transit corridors such as the northern corridor, the Dar es Salaam-Lusaka corridor, the Douala-Ndjamena-Bangui corridor and the Lagos-Abidjan corridor; port security audits in Mombasa, Kenya, and Dar es Salaam; port facilitation in Douala, Cameroon; road safety along the Dar es Salaam-Lusaka corridor; legislation review for selected corridors; axle-load control implementation in the north-south corridor (Zambia-Democratic Republic of the Congo-Durban, South Africa, passing through Beit Bridge); harmonization of transit transport documents (Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC); Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS); Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA); and West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA)); and capacity-building for transport planning specialists in the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the Central African Economic and Monetary Community.

12. As part of its activities to facilitate transit transport in Africa, the Economic Commission for Africa also organized, from 27 to 29 October 2003, an ad hoc expert group meeting on multimodal transport development in Africa. The objective of the meeting was to assist African countries in improving the quality and reducing the costs associated with international transport. The Commission also used the meeting as a platform to sensitize African countries on the Almaty Programme of Action. In this regard, a presentation of the Programme of Action by the Commission was an item on the agenda of the meeting, and copies were distributed to participants in the meeting.

13. Transport development is one of the priority areas in the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). The Economic Commission for Africa highlighted the need for regional and subregional integration within a continental framework. The Commission is working in partnership with the African Development Bank and the African Union. The Commission has collaborated with the African Development Bank in preparing the short-term and the medium- to long-term action plans for the NEPAD infrastructure programme, in which transport facilitation is an important component.

14. Giving high priority to transit corridors, the five regional commissions of the United Nations, with funding from the United Nations development account, are implementing a joint project entitled "Capacity-building in developing interregional land and land-cum-sea transport linkages" during the period 2003-2006. An important component of the project, implemented by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), focuses on transport linkages between Europe and Asia. The first phase of the project will identify and assess the main transport linkages of international importance spanning the Europe-Asia land bridge, while the second phase will look specifically at transport facilitation issues in respect of the identified

linkages. Among the 18 participating countries, 10 are landlocked countries, namely Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Republic of Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The project is being implemented in close cooperation with the landlocked and transit countries as well as with subregional and international organizations.

15. The Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network has been recognized as the major achievement occurring after the Almaty conference. On 23 April 2004, in Shanghai, China, 26 countries signed this breakthrough Agreement, which will enter into force upon ratification by eight countries. The Agreement, the first of its kind to be developed under the auspices of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, establishes the alignment, standards and signage for the 140,000 kilometres (km) of highways extending to the 32 countries constituting the Asian Highway network. Significantly, the Agreement will provide a defined network of highways that provides access to and through all landlocked countries of the region. Furthermore, the Agreement will ensure that future development of the network can be undertaken in a regionally coordinated manner. The positive impact of the Asian Highway could be compared to the boost to regional economic cooperation and trade that occurred in Europe after 1975, when the Economic Commission for Europe engineered a similar arrangement.

16. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific is undertaking a study to identify investment needs and development priorities for the Asian Highway network and related intermodal connections and freight terminals. The study, which seeks to promote the development and upgrading of the highway network, focuses on identifying missing links and substandard sections in regional and subregional transport networks. For example, in cooperation with the Asian Development Bank, the secretariat is working with China, Mongolia and the Russian Federation to facilitate the alignment and development of Asian Highway route AH4 from the Russian Federation through landlocked Mongolia to China.

17. As the railways have an important role to play in linking ocean ports with landlocked developing countries the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific secretariat has also progressed in the formulation of the Trans-Asian Railway Network, with the publication of a new Trans-Asian Railway map. The Commission has proposed that a regional agreement on the Trans-Asian Railway Network be developed, and resources have been secured for the work to begin. The Commission is also promoting the operationalization of the Trans-Asian Railway northern corridor through a series of demonstration runs of container block trains between the port Tianjin, China, and Ulaanbaatar; between the port of Lianyungang, China, and Almaty, Kazakhstan; and between Brest, Belarus, and Ulaanbaatar. Further runs are currently being planned.

18. An integrated approach in addressing trade and transport facilitation issues was recommended by the ESCAP Committee on Managing Globalization at its first session from 19 to 21 November 2003. The Committee encouraged the establishment of national trade and transport facilitation committees.

19. A project that would assist countries in implementing the recommendations of the Almaty Programme of Action, including the application of information and communication technology in trade and transport facilitation, has been jointly developed by the Transport and Tourism Division, the Trade and Investment

Division and the Information, Communication and Space Technology Division of the Commission.

20. Several Greater Mekong subregion transport projects such as the Thailand–Lao People's Democratic Republic–Viet Nam east-west transport corridor project and the China–Thailand via the Lao People's Democratic Republic road improvement project are also being implemented.

21. Over the years, the Economic Commission for Europe has developed a set of international regulations on transport, which establish coherent infrastructure networks, simplify border crossings and provide international safety and environmental standards for transport. The major parts of this set of transport regulations are agreements and conventions, which are legally binding for the countries that become parties to them. The implementation of those international instruments by the ECE member countries has greatly contributed to developing international transport and trade in the ECE region and, thereby, to fostering the growth and integration of European countries, including countries with economies in transition. In addition to its normative work, the Commission also provides technical assistance.

22. The Economic Commission for Europe and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific continue to support the Project Working Group on Transport and Border Crossing Facilitation within the framework of the Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia.

23. At the request of the Government of Chile, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean hosted the fifth ministerial meeting of the Initiative for the Integration of Regional Infrastructure in South America in December 2003. Several of the axes of the Initiative are intended to facilitate movement between points in Bolivia and Paraguay with ports served by ocean-going vessels.

24. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) strategy for implementing the Almaty Programme of Action includes assistance for the development of adequate national transport networks and efficient transit systems and the promotion of regional trade expansion and integration. The UNCTAD secretariat undertakes technical assistance activities of particular interest to the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action, including tools for assessing needs and priorities in trade facilitation in landlocked developing countries, the development of transport and trade facilitation platforms, and capacity-building in trade and transport facilitation for landlocked and transit developing countries. In particular, three UNCTAD current technical assistance projects are of significant impact in landlocked developing countries: (a) a project aimed at providing least developed countries with guidelines and analytical tools to assess their needs and priorities in the area of trade and transport facilitation; (b) a project aimed at assisting developing countries in implementing specific trade facilitation institutional development mechanisms; and (c) an interregional development account-funded project, to be executed during the period 2004-2007, which is aimed at providing landlocked and transit developing countries with sustainable capacity to plan and implement regional trade and transport facilitation initiatives. Three pilot projects to design and implement regional solutions will be carried out in selected transport corridors in landlocked and transit developing countries in Latin America, Africa and Asia.

25. Furthermore, UNCTAD is currently undertaking a number of operational technical assistance projects at the level of both individual countries and subregions that have important transit elements. Thus, activities have commenced in Afghanistan towards implementation with the United Nations Office for Project Services of a project, funded under a World Bank loan, on emergency customs modernization and trade facilitation. Through its Automated Systems for Customs Data (ASYCUDA) programme, UNCTAD presently undertakes a number of projects that include customs transit matters in landlocked developing countries. Beneficiary countries include Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Ethiopia, Malawi, Mali, Niger, Rwanda, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. A joint regional project executed with the Economic Cooperation Organization deals, inter alia, with regional solutions to transit transport problems. Specifically, UNCTAD continues to support the tripartite negotiations between China, Mongolia and the Russian Federation on a transit traffic framework agreement.

26. UNCTAD is planning to hold an expert meeting on the design and implementation of transit transport arrangements in Geneva in November 2004 to discuss the best available solutions to improve transit transport and to review institutional arrangements, including multimodal transport and logistic services, the use of management information systems along supply chains and the conditions required for successful, cost-effective transit arrangements in landlocked and transit developing countries.

27. The UNCTAD secretariat continues to undertake analytical work on establishing efficient transit transport systems in landlocked and transit developing countries. In particular, UNCTAD has initiated analytical work through a proposed pilot project for landlocked countries in West Africa. The purpose of the pilot project is (a) to identify the specific problems that hinder its transit transport and the implementation of existing regional agreements; (b) to suggest options for more efficient transit transport systems in the region; (c) to propose maintenance activities in the administration and regulation of existing transit traffic corridors; and (d) to help to prepare for suitable forms of dissemination of the project's findings and outcome.

28. The World Bank is engaged in the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action in a number of ways. At the global level, the Bank is working with the World Customs Organization to improve and to reform custom procedures that hinder efficient movement of traffic. For that, the bank prepared a customs modernization handbook, which includes a specific chapter on transit and the special case of landlocked countries.

29. At the country level, the World Bank is implementing a number of projects. In particular, in Kenya, the Northern Corridor Transport Improvement Project, now at the final appraisal stage, aims at facilitating international transport operation on the Kenyan section of the corridor, which provides access to Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, and the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. The project includes infrastructure rehabilitation and support for the streamlining of transit procedures and transport regulations as well as a component to address transmission of the human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) along the corridor. Secondly, in West Africa, the Bank is working closely with the Economic Community of West African States and the West African Economic and Monetary Union in preparing a regional West Africa transport project, which

explicitly refers to the Almaty Programme of Actions in its design. The project may involve up to 15 countries at its final stage, all members of ECOWAS, to ensure improvement of road conditions, facilitation of border-crossing operations and implementation of interregional transit agreements. The project will address infrastructure rehabilitation and development, issues of transit regulations, implementation of existing agreements and broader application of information technology in transport operations. Thirdly, the Bank is cooperating with UNCTAD in designing and implementing the Emergency Customs Modernization and Trade Facilitation Project in Afghanistan, approved by the Bank in December 2003.

30. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is working closely with the Governments of Central Asian countries to improve trade efficiency by improving border control and management. The project is funded by the European Commission and is emphasizing interregional cooperation. UNDP started the second phase of the Silk Road project. UNDP is also working closely with the Asian Development Bank in improving the transport systems between China, Mongolia and the Russian Federation as well as energy and transit trade in the region. The Tumen River project, involving China, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Mongolia and the Republic of Korea is considered to be one of the most successful projects in the area. UNDP also provides assistance to the Mekong River initiative.

31. The Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States has undertaken concrete steps to ensure the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action. The Office holds frequent consultations with landlocked and transit developing countries, private sector, multilateral organizations and the donor community on how best to proceed with the implementation of the Programme of Action. The Office pays particular attention to raising international awareness of the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action at the international and regional levels.

32. In particular, the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States conducted a large number of consultations with organizations within the United Nations system and with other relevant international, regional and subregional organizations, including the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme, the regional commissions, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, the Economic Community of West African States, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Economic Cooperation Organization. He also highlighted the importance of the issue at the sixtieth session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and during his bilateral visits to Benin and Senegal, which are the major transit countries in West Africa. The Office also convened an inter-agency meeting to consult on how best to operationalize the coordination, monitoring and reporting mechanism provided in the Almaty Programme of Action and enhance its cooperation with organizations in the field in landlocked and transit developing countries. The preparation of the road map for the implementation of the Programme of Action was an important effort towards a consolidated and coherent approach by the organizations and bodies of the United Nations system and other relevant international and regional organizations. The Office continues its advocacy work related to landlocked developing countries.

33. Pursuant to paragraph 37 of the Almaty Programme of Action, the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States is promoting the accession by landlocked and transit developing countries to the international conventions relevant to the transit trade, as those instruments are the main means through which streamlining, simplification and standardization as well as transparency of rules and procedures can be achieved. The effort will contribute tremendously to the reduction of transit costs. In this context, the Office is undertaking preparations in close cooperation with the Treaty Section of the Office of Legal Affairs and the Economic Commission for Europe, for the 2004 treaty event to promote the accession to the selected conventions in the area of transit trade and transport during the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly. The event will include a number of preparatory events and training programmes, including briefings for the Member States, a seminar on the conventions, information provided on a web site and preparation of an Issues note explaining the benefits that Member States would derive from joining these important conventions deposited with the Secretary-General of the United Nations. On 8 July 2004, a seminar on transit transport conventions applicable to the transit transport was convened at United Nations Headquarters to familiarize the Member States, especially landlocked and transit developing countries, with the key provisions and benefits to be derived from the conventions as well as with procedures and requirements related to the treaty action. The relevant documents, including the Issues note on the selected international conventions applicable to transit transport, electronic compilation of the selected 17 international conventions and the treaty handbook are also posted on the web sites of the Office of the High Representative, the Economic Commission for Europe and the Treaty Section of the Office of Legal Affairs to facilitate Member States' consideration of membership in these important multilateral conventions.

34. The Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States is also assisting with preparations, in cooperation with the Government of Kazakhstan, the host country of the International Ministerial Conference, for a meeting entitled "Role of regional and subregional organizations for the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action". The meeting will bring together senior officials from regional and subregional organizations that are playing a major role in expanding regional trade and developing transit transport cooperation. The purpose of the meeting is to prepare a regional and subregional framework for cooperation and a compendium of projects and deliverables for the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action. The compendium will be used for advocacy and fund-raising purposes.

III. Conclusions and recommendations

35. The Almaty Programme of Action established close linkages between efficient transit transport systems and the development of landlocked developing countries. The Programme of Action is a well-focused and balanced document containing specific actions to tackle the most important development challenges faced by the landlocked countries through establishing efficient transit systems in both landlocked and transit developing countries. The high cost of international trade represents a serious constraint to the trade and

economic development of landlocked developing countries. Measures to deal with the transit problems of such countries have to address a broad range of factors, such as greater market access for the goods originating in landlocked developing countries, imbalance of trade, inadequate infrastructure, inefficient transport organization, poor utilization of assets and weak managerial, procedural, regulatory and institutional systems.

36. Since landlocked developing countries depend on their transit neighbours for access to and from the sea, the establishment of efficient transit systems requires closer and more effective cooperation and collaboration between those countries and their transit neighbours. In this context, regional economic groupings and transit agreements as well as bilateral agreements should play a critical role in promoting transit transport cooperation.

37. Transit policy reforms aimed at enhancing the efficiency of transit operations and reducing transport costs, including the commercialization and liberalization of transport services as well as efforts to improve institutional, procedural, regulatory, and managerial systems, should be further encouraged. In particular, landlocked and transit developing countries should review such issues as foreign exchange regulation, price control or quota systems to support indigenous service providers and restrictions on the use of certain modes of transport.

38. Competition between different modes of transport and between different transit corridors should be further encouraged. Landlocked and transit developing countries should undertake specific measures to use all modes of transport in transit services and establish alternate transit corridors to boost the competition.

39. While recognizing that the appropriate sectoral distribution of investment within a developing country must depend on an overall assessment of the country's priorities, a strong case can be made in respect of landlocked developing countries for giving high priority to financial and technical assistance for the improvement of the transport infrastructure as well as to the management and maintenance of existing facilities. Owing to the relative poverty and related development handicaps characteristic of landlocked developing countries, it is important that financial assistance to those countries be extended under the most generous terms possible.

40. The international community should provide greater market access for goods originating in landlocked developing countries, taking into consideration the high transport costs associated with their remoteness from major world markets, their lack of access to the sea and their dependence on a very limited number of commodities.

41. National ownership and leadership are critical for the effective implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action in order to develop physical infrastructure and improve operational efficiency of the use of existing facilities. Landlocked and transit developing countries should consider giving priority to the establishment of efficient transit transport systems in their development planning and budget allocations as well as in their dialogue with development partners. In this regard, landlocked and transit developing countries should establish, where necessary, a national transport and trade

facilitation board to bring together major stakeholders involved in international trade transactions, including government agencies, service providers, customs, border crossings, banks, insurance, freight forwarders and traders, in order to agree on national policy and operational measures aimed at establishing efficient transit systems.

42. **The organizations and bodies of the United Nations system and relevant international, regional and subregional organizations should provide greater financial and technical assistance to landlocked and transit developing countries. There is a need for concerted and well-coordinated assistance. The organizations of the United Nations system should take necessary action to pool together their expertise and resources to better address the issue. In this regard, measures identified by the road map for the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action should be vigorously pursued.**

43. **Donor countries and international financial and development institutions are invited to make voluntary contributions to the trust fund established to facilitate the implementation of and follow-up to the Almaty ministerial conference.**